

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJM #1106/01 0761448  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 171448Z MAR 06  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0965  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001106

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MUSTAFA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: FATAH LEGISLATORS SEE ISRAELI ACTIONS,  
INTERNATIONAL INACTION EMPOWERING HAMAS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a March 13 meeting in Bethlehem, four Fatah Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members asserted that Israeli policies had played a deciding factor in the Hamas victory in the January 25 legislative elections. These mid-level Fatah leaders, who are close to Fatah's grassroots, argued that Fatah and Hamas held similar views on key final status issues, adding that a more accommodating Israeli and international view toward Hamas would help moderate the movement. The PLC members predicted that economic sanctions against a Hamas-led government would backfire and lead to more Palestinian support for Hamas. Prospects for a Fatah-Hamas unity government, while low, would be possible under certain conditions. The PLC members also anticipated more problems between Fatah and Hamas in the Legislative Council. End summary.

Israeli Policies  
Empowering Hamas  
-----

¶2. (C) Fatah PLC members Muhammad Khalil al-Laham, Issa Qaraqah, Fayez al-Saga, and Fuad Kokali complained to ConGen Poloff that Israeli measures had contributed to Hamas' success in the January 25 legislative elections. (Note: Al-Saga and Kokali -- the former mayor of Bayt Sahur -- won their PLC seats as Fatah district candidates, while al-Laham and Qaraqah won seats as candidates on Fatah's national list. End note.) "We believe that Israeli policies have led us to these results, and the Hamas take-over is related to the failure of the peace process," al-Laham said. He suggested that Palestinians saw a contradiction in the non-reaction from the U.S. to PM Olmert's reported plan to annex West Bank settlement blocs. At the same time, Palestinians saw the international community placing conditions on Palestinians as Israel proceeded with settlement expansion in the West Bank.

¶3. (C) Al-Saga argued that the election results were directly linked to Israeli policies. Palestinians were desperate for a way out of the deteriorating conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, and since Fatah had failed to provide solutions, Palestinians had thrown their support towards Hamas. This did not mean that Palestinians had confidence Hamas would deliver on their election promises, al-Saga said.

¶4. (C) Al-Saga also argued that unless Palestinians saw a "balanced" international policy toward Israel and the Palestinians, he anticipated no progress toward rational solutions. Following on al-Saga's point, Kokali said that Palestinians saw no political horizon as a result of Israel's unilateral policies. He warned that continued unilateralism would endanger Palestinian national aspirations. Kokali

remarked that Palestinians had little confidence in the U.S. role in pushing forward the peace process and perceived U.S. policies as unhelpful since they tended to embrace Israeli positions at the expense of Palestinians. "What does the U.S. want from us?" He described the PLC election results as a gift to Israel who would now claim that there is no Palestinian partner.

#### Hamas, Fatah Convergence on Key Final Status Issues -----

15. (C) Kokali dismissed any notion that Fatah and Hamas were advocating competing agendas. "We are with Hamas on its basic positions," he said, namely the establishment of a Palestinian state in the entire West Bank and Gaza. (Comment: The Hamas charter actually calls for an Islamic state in all of Mandate-era Palestine. End comment.) Fatah and Hamas also held similar positions on the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees. Kokali said that neither Fatah nor Hamas would accept anything less on these issues. Kokali insisted that the PLO remained the point of reference for negotiations with Israel: Hamas recognition of Israel was therefore a secondary matter. Hamas moderation would only come through its participation in the political process. Kokali said that Israel could play a role in moderating Hamas by fulfilling its obligations under the Roadmap.

#### Economic Sanctions Will Backfire -----

16. (C) Qaraqah noted that it was wrong to assume that economic sanctions against a Hamas-led PA would lead to new Palestinian elections. These sanctions would have the opposite effect, Qaraqah said, as the deteriorating

conditions would push Palestinians toward extremism and thereby strengthen support for groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Al-Saqa concurred, adding that Palestinians wholly rejected the terms put forth by the Quartet.

#### Unity Government Possible -----

17. (C) Al-Laham thought that Fatah might join a unity government with Hamas if Hamas guaranteed that it would continue the peace process. Fatah's participation would also require assurances from Israel that it would continue talks. However, given Israeli and U.S. views on Hamas, it made little sense to participate in the government. Hamas recognition of Israel would do little to change the current Israeli thinking or its overall strategy in the West Bank. The conditions for Fatah participation would be Hamas recognition of a two-state solution, cessation of all attacks, and a resumption of talks with Israel.

#### More Problems Ahead For PLC -----

18. (C) Qaraqah and al-Saqa anticipated more problems between Hamas and Fatah in the Legislative Council. Al-Saqa suggested that Hamas preferred to impose its agenda on the Council in order to prove Fatah's failures in the previous Council. Hamas was inclined to focus efforts on the internal domestic situation rather than on the larger issues of recognition of Israel or negotiations. Al-Saqa said that while Hamas had concluded that it has a mandate from the elections, Fatah would continue to defend its actions and preserve its accomplishments from the previous Council.

WALLES